

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2023

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

CHRISTMAS EVE

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Christ the Lord is born into our midst!
All: **Come and sing “Alleluia!”**
One: So come, you who believe. Come, you who search and question and wonder.
All: **Come and adore him, Christ the Lord!**

***OPENING HYMN** “O Come, All Ye Faithful” GtG 133 (*Verses 1, 3, & 4*)

1. **O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant;
O come ye; O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come, and behold him,
born the King of angels!**

Refrain:
**O come, let us adore him;
O come, let us adore him;
O come, let us adore him,
Christ, the Lord!**

3. **Sing, choirs of angels;
sing in exultation;
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all
glory in the highest!
(Refrain)**

4. **Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;
Word of the Father,
now in flesh appearing!**

(Refrain)

Words: John Francis Wade, ca. 1743; trans. Frederick Oakeley, 1841, alt.
Music: (ADESTE FIDELES) John Francis Wade, ca. 1743; harm. *The English Hymnal*, 1906
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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We come, O God, on this night of nights, to celebrate in wonder and to ponder all these things in our hearts. We confess we are overwhelmed by the majesty and befuddled by the mystery of this wondrous gift of love. And sometimes we are tempted to think it is all a hoax. Yet even when we are tempted to dismiss the story may you not dismiss us. Come to us still, in the celebration and the stillness. Abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel, that we might wonder and ponder and believe yet again. For it is in the name of the Christ-child that we pray. Amen.

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON *(from Matthew 1 & Luke 2)*

One: The angel said, "I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord."

All: **His name is Jesus, "for he will save his people from their sins."**

Unison: **"Glory to God in the highest heaven!"**

THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH: The Christ Candle

One: The first candle tells us that
"The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in him tonight."
("O Little Town of Bethlehem")

All: **The second candle reminds us of the song of the angels:**
"Peace on earth, good will to all."
(Luke 2:14)

One: The third candle signals this
"good news of a great joy for all the people."
(Luke 2:10)

All: **The fourth candle helps us remember that,**

**"To show God's love aright
Mary bore for us a Savior,
When half spent was the night."
(*"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"*)**

One: And the candle in the middle of it all proclaims that it is Jesus Christ -- he whose birth we now celebrate -- who is the fulfillment of our hope; it is Jesus Christ who is our peace; it is Jesus Christ who brings us joy; it is Jesus Christ who is the embodiment of God's love.

Let us pray.

Unison: We thank you, O God, for this wondrous gift of Christ. As we celebrate his birth, may he be all to us that you intend him to be. And may we proclaim him our Lord and Savior, and give him our all. In his name we pray. Amen.

***HYMN "What Child Is This" GtG 145**

- 1. What child is this, who, laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the babe, the son of Mary!**
- 2. Why lies he in such mean estate
where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear, shall pierce him through;
the cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail, the Word made flesh,
the babe, the son of Mary!**
- 3. So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
come, one and all, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high.
The virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
the babe, the son of Mary!**

Words: William Chatterton Dix, 1871

Music: (GREENSLEEVES) English ballad, 16th cent.;
arr. *Christmas Carols New and Old*, 1871
Public Domain

A SHARING “Green the Whole Year Round”

***HYMN** “O Little Town of Bethlehem” GtG 121

1. **O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light;
the hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.**
2. **For Christ is born of Mary
and, gathered all above,
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the king,
and peace to all on earth.**
3. **How silently, how silently,
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming,
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.**
4. **O holy Child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin and enter in;
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us; abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel!**

Words: Phillips Brooks, 1868
Music: (ST. LOUIS) Lewis Henry Redner, 1868
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SCRIPTURE READING Luke 2:1-7

CHOIR ANTHEM “Were You There on That Christmas Night”

SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 2:1-12

***HYMN** “We Three Kings of Orient Are” GtG 151

1. **We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.**

Refrain:

**O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light!**

2. Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never
over us all to reign.
(Refrain)

3. Frankincense to offer have I;
incense owns a deity nigh;
prayer and praising gladly raising,
worshiping God Most High.
(Refrain)

4. Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
sealed in the stone-cold tomb.
(Refrain)

5. **Glorious now behold him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
sounds through the earth and skies.**
(Refrain)

Words and Music (KINGS OF ORIENT): John Henry Hopkins, Jr., 1857, alt.
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MEDITATION “The Magi Among Us” by Pastor Bill Vincent

***HYMN** “In the Bleak Midwinter” GtG 144

1. **In the bleak midwinter,
frosty wind made moan;
earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow,
snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter,
long ago.**
2. **Our God, heaven cannot hold him,
nor earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall flee away
when he comes to reign:
in the bleak midwinter
a stable place sufficed
the Lord God incarnate,
Jesus Christ.**
3. **Angels and archangels
may have gathered there;
cherubim and seraphim
thronged the air;
but his mother only,
in her maiden bliss,
worshiped the beloved
with a kiss.**
4. **What can I give him,
poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man,
I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him:
give my heart.**

Words: Christina Rossetti, ca. 1872, alt.
Music: (CRANHAM) Gustav Holst, 1906
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SACRAMENT OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

Invitation to the Lord’s Table

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

(The prayer continues...)

The Lord's Prayer (Traditional)

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

Communion of the People

(Please eat the bread and drink the cup as you are served, as a reminder that we must each make our way to the table, to the manger, to the cross.)

Reflection: "Still, Still, Still"

*Music: (STILL, STILL, STILL) Austrian carol; arr. Walter Ehret, 1963
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Prayer

***CLOSING HYMN** "Silent Night, Holy Night!" GtG 122

**1. Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
'round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.**

2. **Silent night, holy night!**
Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing "Alleluia:
Christ the Savior is born;
Christ the Savior is born!"
3. **Silent night, holy night!**
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face,
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.
4. **Silent night, holy night!**
Wondrous star, lend thy light;
with the angels let us sing
Alleluia to our King:
Christ the Savior is born;
Christ the Savior is born.

Words: Joseph Mohr, 1816; stanzas 1-3, English trans. John Freeman Young, 1863; stanza 4, English trans. Jane Montgomery Campbell, 1863, alt.
Music: (STILLE NACHT) Franz Xaver Gruber, 1818
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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One: ...And let the gathered people of God say...
All: ...Amen.

***RESPONSE** (*from "What Child Is This"*)

**This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the babe, the son of Mary!**

POSTLUDE